

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT WASHINGTON POST OP-ED BY TOM BETHELL, WEDNESDAY, JULY L9, ENTITLED "THE TROUBLE WITH 'AFRICAN SOLUTIONS'."
2. IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, WHENEVER AN ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL HAS MADE A SPEECH ABOUT AFRICA, HE HAS AT SOME POINT SAID THAT THERE MUST BE IN PRINCIPLE, "AFRICAN SOLUTIONS TO AFRICAN PROBLEMS." SO TIRELESSLY IS THAT SHIBBOLETH INVOKED THAT IT IS ACTUALLY A SUB-HEADING, UNDER "AFRICA," IN THE INDEX TO THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT BULLETIN.
3. MEANWHILE, WE HAVE CUBANS IN ANGOLA, RUSSIANS IN

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ETHIOPIA, FRENCH IN ZAIRE AND, AT LAST REPORT, EAST GERMANS IN GUINEA-BISSAU. THIS LIST OF NEO-COLONIAL-IST "PEACE-KEEPERS" COULD BE MADE CONSIDERABLY LONGER. IN ANY EVENT, IT SHOULD BE CLEAR TO ALL BY NOW THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF AFRICAN SOLUTIONS TO AFRICAN PROBLEMS IS HONORED IN WORD RATHER THAN DEED.

4. THE AFRICAN HEADS OF STATES ARE CURRENTLY MEETING

IN KHARTOUM FOR THE 15TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY. THIS IS A GOOD TIME, THEN, TO ASK WHY EVENTS IN AFRICA HAVE DEPARTED SO GREATLY FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION, WHICH HAS GUIDED THE OAU SINCE ITS INCEPTION. THE ANSWER MAY BE FOUND IN ANOTHER OAU PRINCIPLE THAT IS RARELY MENTIONED IN ALL THE DEBATE ABOUT AFRICA, THE PRINCIPLE THAT THE NATIONAL BORDERS, AS THEY EXISTED AT THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE, SHALL NOT BE TAMPERED WITH.

5. THIS PRINCIPLE WAS ENUNCIATED AT THE SECOND OAU MEETING, HELD IN CAIRO IN 1964. AT THAT TIME, AS NOW, ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA WERE SKIRMISHING ALONG THEIR BORDER. SO WERE MOROCCO AND ALGERIA. EMPEROR HAILIE SELASSIE OF ETHIOPIA PROPOSED THE "EXISTING BORDER" PRINCIPLE AS A WAY OF SETTLING THE MATTER IN HIS FAVOR. IT WAS READILY AGREED TO BY ALMOST ALL THE OTHER AFRICAN HEADS OF STATES, BECAUSE MOST OF THEM WERE ALREADY SUFFICIENTLY EMBATTLED WITH INTERNAL DISSENSION AND THEREFORE SAW IT AS A GODSEND: AT LEAST THEY WOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT WHAT THEIR NEIGHBORS MIGHT DO TO THEM.

6. THERE IS AN OBVIOUS DIFFICULTY, HOWEVER. "EXIST-
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ING BORDERS," IN MOST INSTANCES, TURN OUT TO BE BORDERS DRAWN BY COLONIAL POWERS IN THE 19TH CENTURY. WHY, AFTER COLONIALISM ITSELF WAS ENDED, SHOULD SUCH BOUNDARIES BE MAINTAINED? THE EVIDENCE OF THE 1970'S STRONGLY SUGGESTS THAT, FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE COLONIAL POWER, THERE IS SOMETHING VERY LIKE A RACE TO THE STATEHOUSE BY THE VARIOUS "ETHNIC" OR "TRIBAL" FACTIONS WITHIN THE COUNTRY. WHICHEVER FACTION GETS TO THE STATEHOUSE FIRST DECLARES ITSELF TO BE THE RIGHTFUL GOVERNMENT BUT, IT SUBSEQUENTLY TURNS OUT, DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER TO HOLD THE (USUALLY VAST) COLONIAL TERRAIN TOGETHER. NOR DOES IT HAVE, FROM THE RIVAL FACTIONS, THE "CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED." THEREFORE, WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, IT CALLS IN FOREIGN FORCES TO ASSIST IN BEATING OFF INTERNAL RIVALS.

7. THUS THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SANCTITY OF BORDERS, ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO PROTECT AGAINST EXTERNAL ATTACK, IS INVERTED AND USED TO JUSTIFY THE IMPOSITION OF AN INTERNAL HEGEMONY. AND THE FOREIGN "PEACEKEEPING" TROOPS, WHETHER THEY BE CUBANS IN ANGOLA OR BELGIANS IN ZAIRE, ARE PROVIDED WITH THE NECESSARY RATIONALE

FOR BREAKING THE CARDINAL TENET THAT "AFRICANS SHALL SOLVE AFRICAN PROBLEMS": THEY ARE MERELY INVITED GUESTS.

8. THE CUSTOMARY REPLY AT THIS POINT IS THAT, WITHOUT RESPECT FOR EXISTING BORDERS, "CHAOS" WOULD ENSUE. BUT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF "INDEPENDENCE" IN AFRICA, WITH GOVERNMENT IN SOME COUNTRIES CONSISTING OF LITTLE MORE THAN SOLDIERS STANDING AT STREET CORNERS WITH MACHINE GUNS AT THE READY, AND NATIONAL CAPITALS RINGED WITH TANKS AND TROOP CARRIERS, VERY MUCH BETTER THAN CHAOS? YET SUCH CONDITIONS ARE THE LITTLE-NOTED OUTCOME OF PRESERVING COLONIAL BORDERS; OF PRESERVING, IF YOU WILL, THE FICTION THAT A MULTIPLICITY OF TONGUES AND ALLEGIANCES IS A UNITED
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COUNTRY.

9. LURKING BENEATH ALL THIS, OF COURSE, ARE THE DREADED UNDERCURRENTS OF "TRIBALISM." THE REAL FEAR, ONE SENSES, IS NOT THAT AFRICA WILL SUFFER CHAOS, BUT THAT IT WILL "REVERT TO TRIBALISM." THE WORD ITSELF HAS BECOME TABOO. WHEN I HESITANTLY MENTIONED THE WORD "TRIBE" TO A STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL RECENTLY, HE POLITELY SUGGESTED, "TRY 'ETHNIE.'" IT IS A NEW WORD (USED AS A NOUN) THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS EXPERIMENTING WITH. THERE ARE AT LEAST 2,000 "ETHNIES" IN AFRICA, MANY OF THEM CUTTING ACROSS EXISTING BORDERS; AND MANY MORE WITHIN EXISTING BORDERS. NIGERIA, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS OVER 200 ETHNIES, OR TRIBES, AND TANZANIA HAS OVER 100.

10. BUT, TO PROVIDE A DIFFERENT LINGUISTIC SOLUTION TO A LINGUISTIC PROBLEM, WHY SHOULDN'T ETHNIES BE VIEWED AS POTENTIAL NATIONS? THAT WAY THE CONTINENT MERELY BECOMES RIPE FOR A GOOD MANY MORE "LIBERATION" MOVEMENTS--SOMETHING THAT U.N. AMBASSADOR ANDREW YOUNG COULD HARDLY OBJECT TO. AN INDEPENDENT SHABA SURELY MAKES AS MUCH SENSE AS AN INDEPENDENT ZAIRE. AS THE (LONDON) SPECTATOR SAID RECENTLY: "EUROPE ITSELF DECIDED THAT ITS OWN NATIONAL BOUNDARIES WOULD BE FIXED ON ETHNIC AND LINGUISTIC LINES. SOONER OR LATER, THE SAME WILL HAPPEN IN AFRICA."

11. THAT IS NO DOUBT TRUE, AND THE REASON IS THAT ETHNIC "CONSCIOUSNESS" IS LIKELY TO OUTLAST COLONIAL-NATION CONSCIOUSNESS ARTIFICIALLY IMPOSED, AND ARTIFICIALLY SUSTAINED TODAY BY FOREIGN TROOPS. THE MAIN RESISTANCE TO SUCH A CHANGE WILL COME FROM THE ENSCONCED AFRICAN RULERS, FOR WHOM IT WILL ENTAIL A LOSS OF POWER. AT THE
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CURRENT OAU MEETING, A SPLIT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED, WITH SOME COUNTRIES DEPLORING THE USE OF OUTSIDE FORCE TO SOLVE INTERNAL PROBLEMS, OTHERS UPHOLDING IT. EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER, THE CUBANS (AND OTHER FOREIGN TROOPS) WILL TIRE OF ACTING AS POLICEMEN FOR THE MAN-IN-THE-PALACE (WITH LITTLE OR NOTHING IN THE WAY OF IDEOLOGICAL GAINS TO SHOW FOR IT), AND WHEN THEY LEAVE, COLONIAL BORDERS WILL EVENTUALLY GO THE WAY OF COLONIALISM ITSELF. THEN AND ONLY THEN WILL "AFRICANS SOLVE AFRICAN PROBLEMS." CHRISTOPHER

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